



National Park Service

Looking down the entrance of a baited snake trap.

Removing Snakes from Dwellings

Only 20 species of snakes native to the continental United States are venomous and a threat to humans and domestic animals. Still, some people are uneasy when any snake, venomous or not, is nearby or inside a dwelling. Fortunately, there are methods to catch and release snakes without harm to humans or reptiles.

Glueboards

One recommended removal method uses a glueboard. This is simply a piece of wood with several rodent glue traps tacked to it. Individual glue traps are about 5 x 12 in (12.5 x 30 cm) and can be purchased in most hardware, pest control and feed stores. Glueboards can be used in living areas, small crawl spaces, basements, garages or outdoor storage sheds. This technique has been tested and proven to successfully hold 6-foot diamondback rattlesnakes.

Put the glueboard against a wall because snakes tend to follow edges rather than cross open ground. When the snake moves across the board, it sticks to the glue. Don't put the board near pipes, furniture, etc., to prevent the snake from getting leverage and pulling itself off. Glueboards also can trap small pets, so don't put them where domestic animals or non-target wildlife species can reach them. Drill a hole in one corner of the board so that it may be retrieved easily with a hook on a long pole. This allows you to stay a good distance from the snake.

To release a snake from the board, pour vegetable oil on it. The oil slowly breaks down the glue and the snake will eventually move off the board. Some glue residue may stay on the snake for a while, but will be shed with the old skin.

Use only vegetable oil. Many other types, such as motor oil, are toxic to animals. Check the glueboards frequently and do not leave snakes on them longer than absolutely necessary. The boards will not hold large snakes indefinitely.

You may want to release captured non-venomous snakes in your yard. If you capture a venomous snake with a glueboard, do not attempt to remove it. Call a trained and licensed wildlife trapper.

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Funnel Traps

Funnel traps are another method of snake removal. Place these traps, commonly made from window screen, up against a wall in the room where the snake was last seen. Funnel traps are less effective than glue boards because snakes can crawl over, under and around them, and even escape once trapped. One of the best containers for transporting non-venomous snakes is a pillowcase without holes or weak seams.

Preventing Future Entry

After removing unwanted snakes, you should prevent future access for other snakes. Check around your home for holes in the foundation, in corners of doors and windows, and around water pipes. Seal off all openings that are ¼-inch or larger.

Eliminating rodents from your home and yard will reduce the food supply for snakes and make your property less inviting. Eliminate all places where snakes and rodents might hide, including debris, underbrush, roofing tin, plywood, large appliances, car parts and burrows in your yard. Chemicals, horsehair, blood or other substances have not been proven to effectively repel snakes.

Releasing or Handling Snakes: The Legal Angle

Non-Venomous Snakes — No permit is required to relocate non-venomous snakes. Release them in your yard or in a nearby wooded area. Non-venomous snakes are generally beneficial and help to control insect and rodent populations.

Venomous Snakes — Do not attempt to handle venomous snakes. You must have a permit from the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to handle or transport venomous snakes. Contact a licensed wildlife removal specialist to capture, remove and/or transport any venomous snake.

Non-native Snakes — It is illegal to release any species of wildlife that is not native to Florida, and this includes pythons, boas, and all other non-native snakes. Again, it is best to call a licensed wildlife removal specialist to deal with any nuisance wildlife in your home.

For More Information...

- Locate a Nuisance Wildlife Trapper: http://myfwc.com/license_permit/NuisWild.aspx
- Learn to identify Florida snakes: <http://flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/FL-GUIDE/onlineguide.htm>
- Identify Florida's venomous snakes: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW229>